

One Man's Idea of Brotherhood Pays Off

A sign in front of the home of Judith and Roland Conrad at 197-30 122nd Ave., St. Albans, today reads:

"NOT for Sale!"

The sign at the Conrad house is one of dozens that have been posted by white home owners in the neighborhood.

Outsiders may find the signs strange. But to hundreds of neighbors in the surrounding area it is one of many evidences that one man's idea has paid off in a real demonstration of interracial brotherhood.

It is proof that white and Negro householders can live peacefully within a community.

THINGS haven't always been that brotherly in the St. Albans area where the Conrads live. About a year ago the signs that started sprouting didn't start with the word "not." They said: "For Sale."

That was after Neville B. Lake, 41, Negro, moved with his wife and three boys into the home they had bought at 183-41 Elmira Ave.

A month ago Lake, a silk screen artist and a writer on technical subjects, wrote a

letter. It started "Dear Neighbor," and he sent 500 copies of it to home owners in the area surrounding his house.

He pointed out that the neighborhood into which he had moved had been barred to Negroes from the time the

houses were built about 17 years ago.

"When you consider that in some areas of this land of ours, a Negro family with our daring is oftentimes beaten, stoned or bombed, yes, sometimes murdered, we have been well received and com-

fortably situated," the letter went on.

LAKE admitted there had been some "minor unpleasanties," but nothing really serious . . . except for the fact that a number of white owners immediately put their

houses up for sale. All the purchasers were Negroes.

By now, however, "most of the bigots are gone," Lake wrote. To the "goodly number of remaining white residents," he addressed this plea:

"Do not run madly from your homes, but instead, attempt to keep this the democratic community it has become. In that way, it can be pointed out as a shining example of racial unity, instead of another of America's shameful scars which your leaving will make it."

LAKE'S APPEAL had an immediate effect. Whites and Negroes got together and formed the "Interracial Brotherhood Council of Hollis-St. Albans." Co-chairmen . . . one white, one Negro . . . were elected. Hundreds, mostly white, contacted Lake and cheered his effort.

The council has held weekly meetings in members' houses since it was formed. Leaders of established civic groups in the neighborhood have pledged their support.

Lake formerly lived at the city's Woodside Houses. The comfortable six-room brick-and-fieldstone bungalow on Elmira Avenue is the first home he has owned.



NO SALE: Mrs. Judith Conrad posts "NOT for Sale" sign, one of many sprouting on St. Albans homes, since Neville B. Lake, first Negro to move into a "restricted" neighborhood, sent out a letter appealing for interracial brotherhood. Watching Mrs. Conrad, left to right, are Lake, and William Lee and Werner Schott, co-chairmen of a new interracial brotherhood council formed in the area.