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The 25 children who attend Little Bullskin School in northeastern Clay County all walk, some nearly three miles on mountain paths.

Readin', 'Ritin' And Remoteness

Little Bullskin School in East Kentucky may be frill-less, but it's certainly not friendless

By **JOE CREASON**, Courier-Journal Staff Writer
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THIS is a rubber-tired, air-conditioned age when sometimes a person may come to conclude that most of the elements associated closest with everyday life—education included—are as modern as tomorrow.

However, far beyond the paved roads and the neon lights and the TV antennas there still can be found isolated areas in Kentucky where time appears to have stood still.

There, particularly in the remote, pinched valleys of parts of mountainous Eastern Kentucky, conditions in many respects have changed

little in the last 50 years. There, some schools do not have running water, indoor plumbing, lunchrooms, well-equipped playgrounds, central heating and so many of the latter-day conveniences generally held to be part and parcel of education in this sophisticated day.

Such a school is Little Bullskin, a school which mirrors the generally impoverished condition of the area it serves in Clay County.

Little Bullskin, which is named for the creek beside which it is perched, is a one-room, one-teacher school located in the hill country north-

east of Oneida. The land in that part of Clay County is steep, the soil is thin and stingy. Most of the residents work, when employment is available, as day-labor hands.

The road past Little Bullskin is of dirt, and deep ruts have been chewed into it, making it all but impassable certain seasons of the year.

The present frame school building was erected more than 30 years ago, and today it has an enrollment of 25 children in the first through sixth grades. All the children walk, some of them nearly three miles, to school.

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Inside the one-room schoolhouse, seats are all arranged to face the stove, which Mrs. Cord D. Wilson uses for both heating and cooking.



The largest Sixth Grade boy, Willard Burns, arrives before 7 each morning to start the fire. He also keeps the fire going all day.



There is no source of water on school property, so each day two pupils—these are Joyce Burns and Sudie Burns—are assigned to get it from a house $\frac{1}{8}$ mile away.

The school is blessed with a dedicated teacher and some

Over the years the building has been so poorly maintained that by now large cracks have developed around the one door, the windows and in the warped floor. The desks, which bear the deep-carved initials of former generations of students, are arranged like spokes in a wheel, with the big, pot-bellied heating stove in the center of the room as the hub.

Little Bullskin not only does not have indoor water; it doesn't even have a well or cistern or spring on its property. All water must be brought from the nearest house, about an eighth of a mile away.

Each day, two of the larger students are appointed to see that the big military blitz can be filled with water for drinking and for the hand-washing ritual that has become part of the school routine.

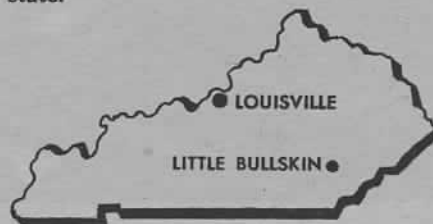
The only flat ground on school property is a plot that slopes down to the creek, a tributary of Red Bird River. For years this has been used as a playground, even though it wasn't equipped with a single play item.

The school's one modern convenience is electricity. Since an R.E.A. line snakes over the hills nearby, some time back a line was run into the

schoolhouse and two single-bulb drop lights installed.

Although free lunch commodities from the federal government's surplus food list are badly needed, Little Bullskin isn't eligible to receive them because the County cannot provide the separate lunchroom building and the paid cook required by the red-tape stretchers in Washington.

Aside from the educational cake frosting which time and circumstance has denied them, the students of Little Bullskin are no different from 6-to-12-year-olds anywhere in Kentucky. They are just as bright-eyed and enthusiastic, as anxious for recess and, other factors being equal, as quick to learn as boys and girls who attend the most modern elementary school in the state.



And in spite of the many things Little Bullskin doesn't have, it does have two things that would be a credit to any school—a dedicated teacher and far-away friends:

The teacher is Mrs. Cord D. Wilson, a graduate of Union College who grew up in that part of Clay County.

The far-away friends are members of the Louisville Pilot Club, a service organization of professional women, which more or less adopted Little Bullskin School and its pupils two years ago.

Mrs. Wilson, who lives within walking distance, is the sort of woman who was born to be a schoolteacher. She has the patience of a prophet and, since she is a native of the area, she knows the background of the children and goes out of her way to keep them from losing—even in the face of present adversity—the fierce pride that is the mark of mountain people.

For instance, when she receives free pencils or paper, items in exceeding short supply at Little Bullskin, she makes the children do something extra to get them—learn a Bible verse, turn in a particularly good spelling assignment.



There was no recreation equipment in the playground area behind Little Bullskin School before the school and its pupils were "adopted" by the Louis-

ville Pilot Club two years ago. Now, the youngsters have not only a sturdy basketball goal but also horseshoes and football equipment for their yard.

far-away friends

"I want them to work for what they get," she explained. "I don't want them ever to think they can get anything without working for it."

Government red tape to the contrary, Little Bullskin now has a hot-lunch program, as well as many other educational frills the school never enjoyed before, thanks to the Pilot Club.

At regular intervals, Pilot Clubbers mail big batches of food items with which Mrs. Wilson is able to set a hot, if modest, noon meal before the children. The lunches include such varied hot dishes as chili, dried beans, meat balls and spaghetti, plus powdered milk and sweets.

Actually, the food commodities are just part of the help the Louisville women have given the school since they learned of it through Save The Child Federation, a national organization.

They have equipped the playground with a basketball goal and ball, horseshoes and a football. They have provided reference books, encyclopedias and fiction, toilet tissue, soap and paper towels, teaching aids such as maps and globes, and a new stove.

Moreover, the club has sent down clothing for indigent children, and has arranged for eye examinations and glasses for those in need. It

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All during the morning, while classes are going on, Mrs. Wilson keeps watching the food for lunch which is cooking on the stove. The Pilot club provides this food.



While Mrs. Wilson mixes canned chili with the spaghetti which has been cooking on the stove, Sudie Burns prepares some powdered milk to go with lunch.



Now it's hand-washing time, and Raleigh Marcum takes his turn at the ingenious contraption shown here, which permits the mixing of cold and warm water.



Classes are resumed while the chili warms. Chaney Lundy is learning about geography from a magnetic map sent to the school by the Louisville Pilot Club.

The hand-washing ritual and a prayer of thanks are both a part of mealtime here

even replaced the two single-bulb drop lights with two sets of fluorescent tubes.

"Look around," Mrs. Wilson said. "There isn't much here the Pilot Club hasn't given us."

The hot lunches are perhaps what have meant the most.

On a recent cold November day, the menu included canned chili with spaghetti, crackers spread with apple butter, and powdered milk which had been doctored with chocolate syrup—this in place of the cold biscuits and bacon many of the pupils otherwise would have brought from home.

Mrs. Wilson arrived early, shortly before 7, this day to write class assignments on the cracked blackboard and to start cooking the spaghetti for the chili. Willard Burns, the largest Sixth Grade boy, who starts the stove fire for 10 cents a day, already had a roaring fire going.

Once classes started at 7:40, the pot with the spaghetti was put on the stove, and all morning Mrs. Wilson would check on it now and then.

About 10:30, Sudie Burns, another Sixth Grader, was given the job of mixing the powdered milk with water, while Mrs. Wilson stirred the canned chili in with the boiling spaghetti.

When the meal was ready the hand-washing ritual was begun. All the children, starting with the youngest, marched one at a time to Little

Bullskin's version of a lavatory and treated their hands to a good scrubbing.

The wash basin is an ingenious arrangement of two lard cans suspended from the wall and connected by a rubber hose that runs down to a pipe controlled by a cut-off valve. One can contains warm water, the other cold. By turning the valve the children can get a mixture of water from the two cans.

After all hands were washed, the children returned to their seats and covered the scarred desk tops with pieces of plastic Mrs. Wilson has salvaged from dry-cleaning packages. Then each one single-filed past a table in the corner of the room and received a bowl of steaming hot chili, crackers and a paper cup of milk.

No one started eating until all had been served and still another daily ritual had been observed.

Heads were bowed while a student—it's a different one each day—offered a prayer:

"Dear Lord," the Fourth Grader whose turn it was to give the prayer said in a low, almost inaudible voice, "thanks for this food and all our blessings and our friends."

The prayer was short and simple. But it was heartfelt, and with particular emphasis upon "friends," the kind of friends Little Bullskin School has found in the Pilot Club of Louisville.