

When Teachers Live With Children—

MARY L. McMILLAN

Mary L. McMillan is educational consultant in the Iron County School District at Cedar City, Utah. She writes that when the opportunity is made, children in rural community schools can have real learning experiences in helping to manage the affairs of the school.

In one community school, for example, the principal has teaching and supervisory responsibilities which necessitate his leaving the office for the greater part of the day. There is no paid clerical help in the school. In order to take care of the routine office business, older students are trained to assume responsibility for the day's office activities. They receive visitors, direct new students and guests, deliver mail, answer the telephone, carry messages, fill teacher-supply requisitions, collect and count lunch money and other funds, supervise the lost and found department, keep the office in order, and assist with certain records and reports. To help boys and girls discharge these responsibilities, definite instructions are given at the beginning of the year and as the need arises.

These opportunities for socially useful work affect children in many ways. Some have gained status as a result of the experience. Others have grown in resourcefulness and dependability, been stimulated to a greater interest in school management, developed a wholesome attitude toward work to be done, and gained in an appreciation of the administrator's job.

Miss McMillan also sends a story of how a teacher in a rural situation utilized the opportunity presented by one child's special problem to provide a richer program of group living for all concerned. The teacher's story is an interesting one, we believe you'll agree.

"I was confronted with a problem this fall when a child in my group became ill every day when we began work period. She cried, registered a slight temperature, and appeared to be in pain. In short, she was physically ill. Each time this happened I excused her to go home, and each morning or noon she came back to try again. For three consecutive days this series of events occurred. I then called her mother and asked that we have a conference and that Joan be examined by a doctor. Mrs. Lewis accepted the invitation and was very cooperative. She said Joan had asked 'Mother, have you ever felt like everything inside of you is just tied up in a knot? That's how I feel when I go to school—and besides, I don't know a single soul.'

"There were several things we thought might have contributed to this disturbance. Joan had been brought to school for three years by her two brothers; now she was expected to come by herself. The family had taken a long trip just before school started and she had had little time to rest. A bicycle accident had resulted in a bad bump on her head. A new teacher and a roomful of strange children presented a problem in social adjustment. I suggested to Mrs. Lewis that she

or Joan's father come to school a few times until the child began to feel a little more secure with us.

"The next morning, Friday, Joan's father visited with us until recess. The program for the day included a trip to the livestock show. Mr. Lewis offered to find out the best time for us to attend. Joan's brother had a calf in the show, and because she had been there the children decided Joan should direct us to the most interesting spots. This day's planning and activities appeared to be the beginning of a happy adjustment for Joan.

"I felt the established rapport might be lost by Monday, so I asked Joan and three other students to come to my house for lunch on Saturday. She thoroughly enjoyed the experience. There have been no tears nor school illness since, and we hope the 'knot' inside Joan has really been untied.

"Because of the sincere appreciation expressed by my four luncheon guests, I extended the plan. Every Saturday I have invited four different students to have lunch with me and my young daughter in our home. One mother told me that the whole family had had to practice the best table etiquette for a week as a result of her son's acceptance of my invitation. I have not been too analytical. Perhaps it is enough that all of us are enjoying this bit of social living."

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