

MEMORIES SHARED

1920 - 1963

Quotes From Letters Received

MEMORIES SHARED

Man's real possession is his memory - for it can neither be taxed nor stolen. Should you make a list of lovely things, memories of childhood would be among the dearest. We asked for sharing of memories of former students, teachers, and families associated with the Pittman Community Center. From those received, the following is a composite of such. While entire articles or letters were welcomed, only certain lines or paragraphs are accented here.

"I would like to see your history pay tribute to the excellent teachers we had whose dedication and concern for the students is unequalled. Two of the teachers who stand out in my mind are Anna W. Pearsall and Majorie Ogle. Mrs. Pearsall was very strict and at the time not many of the students fully appreciated her efforts. It was only after we matured that we could see the depth of her dedication and concern and know what a really wonderful person and teacher she was. Miss Ogle had a way of teaching English that excelled any teaching I have seen at any time. I didn't really appreciate her teaching until I got to college and found that the three of us who were from Pittman were the only three in school who found English easy." Magdaline Hartsell Fox, class of '55.

"I worked in the Goodwill Store and the Post Office for several years," wrote Sallie Cantrell Price. "I worked under Dr. and Mrs. Burnett, later under Dr. and Mrs. Bishop. I made acquaintance with all the teachers, nurses and students that came to Pittman during this time. There were students from Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, majoring in nursing to help and work under Dr. Robert Thomas. The object of my coming to Pittman Center to work was to put my children in a good Christian atmosphere as well as education. My children were Ralph, Paul and Kathleen." Bonnie Sue Boling Rolen wrote: "If you should make a book for sale of the school, I sure want one. I live in Maryville now and work at Blount Memorial Hospital. I am married and have two children. I have wonderful memories of the school."

"We had some very good times at Pittman School," wrote Charlotte Ann Moyers Sexton, "and I will never forget some of my special friends and class mates that I met while attending school there. Some of these were Mrs. Anna Pearsall, Mrs. Eva Thomas, Alma Stoddard, Myra Wakeman, Miss Edwards, Eugene Huskey, George Marshall, and Betty Webber. I am a Nurse. I got my license in May, 1966. I found my place in the nursing profession and love every minute of it." Charlotte, class of '50, is the daughter of Fred and Lila Moyers.

Claude Ogle wrote: "I would like to add as a passing thought . . . Over the years I have traveled pretty close to the four corners of the world, and I can say in all sincerity that there is no place in the wide world that has the standards of goodness and character of the people that were, and still are, a part of the community of Pittman Center. I cannot think of a single person that I ever knew that has not been a credit to mankind. Those who grew up in our little corner of the world were the best. May the good Lord take a liking to all of you and yours and keep you around for a long time." Claude was the son of Newton and Minnie Bradshaw Ogle. He became the owner of JECO Manufacturing Company, Chattanooga, TN. He was of the 1932 class.

Roxie Headrick Watson, daughter of Russell and Sarah Reagan Headrick, shared the following: "I started to school at Pittman Center when I was in the third grade. I graduated from high school in 1930. When I first started in school, we rode in covered wagons. Gee, it was cold in the winter. Most of my high school years I boarded at the Community, while working for my board. I lived with Miss Mecham, Miss Wesp and other students. While I stayed there, I could attend all school activities. I remember one winter we awoke to see everything covered with ice, even the trees, bushes, ground and everything. It was my job to go to the barn, down at the foot of the hill, and milk the cow. Going down I tried to hold on to some hedge which just snapped off in my hand. Finally I just sat down and slid to the barn. What a job it was to get back up that hill! I was at the dormitory when the dry kiln caught fire. We formed a bucket brigade from the edge of Webbs Creek in attempts to put out the fire. I ruined my best shoes. What a loss at the time, for it was so hard to get anything. But all in all, it was a happy life." Roxie married Carl Watson and had one daughter, Carlena.

Kate Price Reed, class of 1933, shares the following memories: "My memories are varied in regard to school life at Pittman Center. The teachers were so good and courteous and dedicated. The community fairs left lots of good memories. The first ice cream I ever saw was at the fair. Those classes in home economics proved to be a blessing in my life in my trying to be a housekeeper. Under Juanita Maupin McMahan's teaching, I feel we had the equivalent of a college degree in home economics. Basketball under the leadership of Haskel T. Ogle was a rewarding experience. I think most of all he was a humanitarian. Bible, one of the classes we had to take, taught me lots of Bible history I might never have had. Good teachers indeed were Mr. Luther Flynn and Anna Mae Caldwell Ogle. Both were so dedicated. I think Ray Lindsey said it best when he described Mr. Flynn in a statement he shared at one of the alumni reunions: 'I think Mr. Flynn was the only high school principal in the whole United States that principled a school and never did anything but raise his eyebrows.' "

Elizabeth Parton Ramsey, class of 1933, shared her memories poetically as follows: "Now that I am older, I look back on the years. I remember my childhood with its smiles and its tears. I was the oldest, the first one in line; one every two years, until there were nine. My dear sister, Violet, a beautiful child; with a voice like an angel, she sang all the while. Sturdy little Ben Leonard, with his freckles and tan; by the time he was five, he thought he was a man. Sweet little John Wesley, the pick of the crew; it broke all our hearts when he died at two. Charles was a clown, friendly and cute with a smile or a frown. Ray was my special - just like my own! My sweet baby brother until he was grown. And as I look back in my mind I can see, cute chubby Ada and pretty Ruby Lee. My parents worked hard for all that they had; just good mountain people - my mother and dad. And as I sit dreaming, my memory thrills, to my old mountain home in the Tennessee hills."

Miss Juanita Maupin McMahan came to Pittman Center High School in 1927. The following relates her experience there as being the first home economics teacher. "I'll admit it all seemed hopeless to me, and by night time I was homesick and often ended up in tears, but the wonderful spirit of all the Pittman folk put me to shame. The next day I was ready to go again. To get the home economics department furnished, with no money, was a trying time for all. We often made hasty substitutes and were criticized for a number things, but no one seemed to mind. It was all a part of making do with what we had. In the early days, we served soup to the smaller children. Vegetables were cooked in huge containers, lard cans as I recall. The home economics girls dished up soup in tin cups as the little children marched into the room. Many had come to school without breakfast and were hungry and cold. I also helped with church services in the outlying churches. We had to walk most of the time. Sometimes we rode horseback. The churches where I helped were Webbs Creek and Black Gum Gap."

Trula King Whaley shared: "I have so many fond memories of Pittman Center that it is very hard to make a decision as to what I like best. Maybe I'm just old and don't know it, but I'll treasure the training I got at Pittman even if I did drive the teachers nuts." Trula, class of 1931, lived at Pittman while in school. She married and went to the state of Washington.

Zelma Lange Hixon shared the following memories: "I came to Pittman Center in the year, 1928. I had just graduated from Dakota Wesleyan University. I can say I spent seven of the best years of my life in Pittman Center. It was there I met my husband, also a teacher, and it was there our two children were born. We were all expected to do some church and community work beside teaching. We were assigned work in one or two of the small Methodist churches in the area. My concerns were Webbs Creek and Black Gum Gap. Miss Juanita Maupin, a home economics teacher, was my co-worker. Sometimes we went farther to the Flats. We were largely on our own. We would split - one going one way and the other one, another. When our day's work was done, we met to come back to the Center - two tired little girls. We had to cross Webbs Creek twenty times on a footlog without the benefit of a hand rail. On cold frosty mornings we often had to get down on all fours to keep from falling in the creek. For whatever contributions I made to Pittman Center, I received in return so much more. It was a real privilege to have been there."

Henry Refo, principal for two and a half years in 1951-53, wrote the following: "Although I feel sure that the kind of memories you are looking for are the ones you will get from old students, I have one that impressed me greatly at the time it took place and still does. One day a gentleman walked into the principal's office and introduced himself. He handed me his calling card. He was from the FBI in Washington, D. C. For a moment I wondered whether I was in trouble, one of our staff, or one of our students! He quickly relieved my anxiety by asking if we had a typing class, and if so might he have permission to speak to the students in it. I told him that we did have a typing class and asked him his interest in such. He said that the FBI office in Washington needed typists, both men and women. I casually asked how many he needed. He replied with a gesture that the office could use all in our class! 'The whole class?' I asked with astonishment. 'yes,' he replied. 'If they cannot type well, we can teach them. The important matter for us in the FBI office is that they be loyal Americans and we have found the boys and girls from this area of the country to be just that, 100% Americans.'

During the summer months, Pittman Community Center became the camp retreat center for church groups all across the country. It is impossible to mention the many folk that visited the Center during the many years of summer camp. They used the Pittman stop for their youth, so that they could become acquainted with one of the Methodist missionary projects of their church. One local Knoxvilleian, Alan R. Branson, wrote a letter of his impressions of Pittman Center during one of his churches retreats in 1963. He wrote: "I was a young teenager when our church youth group came to Pittman. I was a member of Second Methodist Church in Knoxville, which is a large inner city church with many families and ties to Sevier County and the Smoky Mountains. When we arrived, all of the boys stayed in one dormitory with our Sunday School teachers. All the girls were in the other dormitory. The thing that sticks in my memory is that our room had a laundry heater in it. The kind we used to refer to as a monkey stove. When visiting the "commissary", I remember seeing a crank type telephone. Someone informed us that this was one of the last crank type systems in use. We boys would work in the garden and orchards. The girls worked in what was called a Bible school with local young children. We would have teaching and singing and games and group discussions. There was a lot of time for inner reflections as there were no televisions or radios, just each other and pleasant surroundings."

In sharing early thoughts of a first grade class, Glenn Cardwell wrote: "Finally, as I am reminded of all the federal programs to education today and since then, I don't think the school child of today would possibly be more blessed than we were in the 1937 first grade class. We had no books. Miss Mary Elder had the only books available. From these we, each in our turn, would read aloud to her. We also read from words and sentences which she wrote on the chalkboard, or from flip cards which she would hold up before us. Miss Elder kept a bible, and at the beginning of each day she would read to us, oft times while holding a homesick child or perhaps one that had suddenly become ill. We pledged allegiance to the U.S. flag and had our morning prayer, with Miss Elder doing the praying. She instructed her little flock that prayer was to a Heavenly Father who created all things, and we should bow our heads and close our eyes while prayer was being offered to Him. Upon Miss Elder's 'amen', tattle-tale individuals would always start speaking out about those who did not close their eyes. That first grade class of 1937 was in one room of the Goodwill Industries, the same building where the store and post office were, as well as the building wherein Dr. and Mrs. Burnett lived. Perhaps the accessibility of our class to their living quarters provided them ample opportunity to visit with us. I don't recall Mrs. Burnett talking much. Dr. Burnett usually told either a Bible story or one with a good moral ending. He usually came in or left saying he just had to come by and see 'his children'. It made us feel good to have him come by as often as he could. A good beginning is always a blessing. This country has had many of them. Pittman Center is no exception. With the Psalmist, we should say, 'yes, I have a goodly heritage.'"

Jessie Mechem Ledford recalled some of her experiences in teaching and working at Pittman Community Center in the years of the 1920's.

In June 1922 I graduated from Ohio Wesleyan College. Two girls had told in chapel one day about going to a place in the mountains where they taught Bible School. I wondered why I couldn't do that. I had always loved the hills of southern Indiana, but wanted to see a real mountain. So I went to the Cumberland Mountains the day after graduation. At that time to get to Spring City, Tennessee, I had to go on the train to Chattanooga where I changed to a train going up another valley to Spring City, where I was met by a lady and boy on horseback, leading an extra horse. It was a long rough ride to the top of the mountain at Milo, and down into Sequatchie Valley at Melvina. I had a real good summer there. A man named Dr. J. S. Burnett was in charge of the school where I worked. I wrote letters and reports to him and he kept in touch with me (of course not by telephone), but I had never met him. When September came, I had to depart and go back to Indiana, and then to Illinois, where I had a good-paying job teaching at Bradford High School. There were no mountains there, or springs - (another item of nature that fascinated me) - but I began to save money to go to Columbia University to work on my Master's Degree the next summer.

When I had been there about a month I got a telegram from Dr. Burnett, whom I had never seen, telling me that several teachers at a big school he had started at a place called Pittman Center had left and asking whether I would resign and come. At first I replied that I could not come until I had fulfilled my contract in June. Letters and telegrams followed, each more urgent. We really got to know each other pretty well. I remember he kept saying that it was "unthinkable" that the school should have to close. I went to the school board and asked to be released. The men on the board became interested in Pittman Center. The wife of the President of the board had graduated recently from the University of Illinois. She belonged to a sorority that supported the Pi Beta Phi school in Gatlinburg. What luck! The president told me if I could find a satisfactory teacher to take my place, the board would release me. There were Teachers Agencies in those days. I registered in several, and applications poured in. I was released in December and came at once to Pittman Center. Bradford people gathered school supplies and many boxes of books and sent them.

To get to Pittman Center I came to Chattanooga and then up the valley to Knoxville, then to another train to Newport, where Joe Kyker met me with his Ford. We spent the rest of the day fording Webbs Creek and getting stuck in the mud. In the meantime, Dr. Burnett had found Docia Cate at Kodak. She had taught a five month school and was glad to come. Her father brought her and we arrived at the same time. We were called twins. We immediately became good friends and that lasted till her sudden death. Allen and I went to her funeral. I still miss her very much.

I was delighted from the beginning, and more so after I had my first day of school. I had fine young people who were so eager to learn.

The salary at Pittman was the same per month as in the county - \$60.00, but Pittman lasted 8 months for grades. School had begun in July so it was out by end of February. Then we were paid \$25.00 per month. I had saved enough to survive.

The first year there were: Miss West, who became principal when Rev. McConnell left; Nora McMahan, Docia Cate; Mr. Asher; Mary Reagan; and in emergencies, Claude Ramsey, and Homer Lindsey, and maybe others. Our 8th grade graduation was a milestone. There was no high school supported by the county. I am not sure when Smoky Mountain Academy began offering high school work, supported by the Baptist Church; but Miss Mayme Grimes was principal of that school.

I was in charge of the 7th and 8th grades. The students came to learn and what a wonderful group they were. In season we had displays of leaves and wild flowers. We knew the names but later, when the trees were bare, boys brought twigs and it amazed me of their knowledge. I admired their observance of nature and ever since, all these years, I have scrutinized twigs and kept on learning.

Miss Jessie Mechem, along with Helen Wesp, directed the first church built by the Mission Board in the Pittman Community and that was on Copeland. They had a good Sunday School and Church.

Miss Mechem married Allen Ledford. Allen was a graduate of the first class from Pittman Center High School in 1928. Allen, after leaving, went farther in school - becoming a Methodist Minister. They are the parents of one daughter. Mrs. Ledford lives in Rural Retreat, Virginia where they spent their years together until the death of Allen.

In a letter addressed to Glen Cardwell, Ruth Floyd has this to say about some of her memories at Pittman Center School. Ruth is the daughter of Jeames and Ada Lethco Floyd. Ruth is married to Floyd Oglesby and lives in Powell, Tennessee

"Glen, I have a little story to tell you that you might want to print in the book. I won't mind. I spent the summer of 1943 at the dormitory. I was to work so I could stay and go to High school. Doctor and Mrs. Thomas didn't know I was the 'jar washer' at home. They thought I could can. I didn't know beans about canning. I picked peas and made kraut. I had used old caps on the jars and everything spoiled. All that waste! They asked me later, 'why didn't you tell us you had never canned?' My reply, 'you didn't ask me.' Another big 'boo boo' I made was: I was afraid to stay in the dormitory by myself and Doctor and Mrs. Thomas took me up to stay at their house. I wanted to make them proud of me so I searched all over the house and in the basement I found dirty jars to wash. After all, that was my expertise. I thought, 'Good Lord, these dirty, moldy jars - they will be so happy to know I cleaned them!' In so doing, I did away with all of Dr. Thomas's penicillin! but they never scolded me.

Glenn, I remember the hot soup the school used to serve in little tin cups. I think it was white bean and cheese soup. I remember the fairs and the silent movies in the chapel. I remember Miss Ora Shultz and the beautiful pictures she would draw at the top of the blackboard in colored chalk. She drew birds and flowers, and she was good at it too."

Archie Ray (Dennis) McMahan wrote:

My whole life has been enriched by the principles learned at Pittman Center. They were the ones taught by my parents, but carried out to hundreds of boys and girls. Our chapel services and devotions in our dormitory are memories I will always cherish. The twelve girls who lived together felt as if we were a family and that closeness still remains. I was a very young Christian when I came to Pittman Center and it was there that I learned that my life was to be used, not just for myself, but for God and others.

I hope that the lives I have touched as a teacher will remember those Christian Principles too.

The teachers of Pittman Center were devoted to their vocations and were always ready to go the second mile with us. Some have passed to another life, but I want the ones who are still with us to know that they are extra special with me.

Archie Ray Dennis is married to Fred McMahan - and lives in Richardsons Cove. They are the parents of Jack and Tommy McMahan. Archie Ray taught school at Pittman Center in the year of 1953-54. She was substitute for all grades in the years of 1954-63



Ethel Eastridge Shultz, a daughter of Verlin and Flora Cardwell Eastridge, graduated from Pittman Center School in the year of 1956. An intelligent and capable person, she is married to Donald Shultz. This couple has three children. They are members and workers in the Hills Creek Baptist Church of Emerts Cove.

Ethel Eastridge Shultz shared her memories:

Some of my fondest memories of being a student at Pittman Center are as follows. The most cherished ones were the love, patience, interest, kindness, and the dedication that the teachers had for the students. They always gave you the confidence that you needed in yourself when you thought you couldn't do that or wanted to give up on a project or a subject. Many foundations of my life were laid at Pittman Center through teachers like Marjorie Ogle, Cora Deats Huskey, Kate Maples, Iva Bradshaw, Kate Franklin, Anna Pearsall, Eugene Huskey and Henry Refo, who are a few of the many. The respect that you could have for these teachers was because of their high moral standards and the efforts they gave to their students were beyond the call of duty. Many doors of opportunities have been opened and vocations gained for many students who attended Pittman Center because of them and others, also. Thanks! You taught us many things besides Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. The impact that you have given on the lives of many people will never be forgotten.

I have lots of fond memories of good lunchroom cooks, like Zelma Whaley, Maude Shultz and Nora Morris. The good times of playing basketball and the trips taken with the teams. Mr. Eugene Huskey - coach, always made sure that each player got home safely or had a place to spend the night. Oh! those dedicated bus drivers, who spent hours on the road with us on ball trips and taking us to our door steps at home. My love for Pittman Center will always continue and I will always be grateful for the opportunity for an education.

Last, but not least Pittman Center was where I met my husband, Donald Shultz. Many student courtships at Pittman Center School developed into marriage and have survived many years.

To me, what Pittman Center offered is what the world needs, today. Author Bertrand Russell says it well, "There are certain things it should avoid." It needs compassion and a wish that mankind should be happy; it needs the desire for knowledge and the determination to eschew pleasant myths; it needs, above all, courageous hope and the impulse to creativeness. The root of the matter is a very simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it for fear of the derisive smile with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean - please forgive me for mentioning it - is love, Christian love, or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide in action, a reason for intellectual honesty.

I'll always cherish the practice of going to chapel each morning before starting the day with students doing the Bible reading and prayer. Miss Myra Wakeman at the piano playing for us to march and leading us in singing.

Silver Pen Awards

REPRINTED FROM THE KNOXVILLE JOURNAL

Porch reflections on idyllic life along Webb's Creek, Sevier County

Editor, The Journal:

I was just remembering my early days on Webb's Creek in Sevier County. I used to sit on our big front porch and think about the future. Now, after more than 50 years, I sit on my front porch and think about the wonderful life we used to have on Webb's Creek.

It occurred to me that you are an old timer if you could remember when:

- you wanted a drink of cold milk, you went to the spring house;
- the dipper gourd hung on a nail beside the spring;
- the ice truck came from the county seat once a week;
- all the kids were afraid of a water dog;
- the school gym was taller than it was wide;
- the place where we played football was a part of Mr. Stamey's watermelon field;
- after a heavy rain you had to put the footlog back before you could get across the creek;
- you caught silversides out of the branch;
- a paperwad gun was made out of an elderberry stalk;
- the two seasons of the school year were chinquapin season and ramp season;
- the lunch hour at school was long enough so that we could slip off and go swimming in the creek;
- the school buses were built by the drivers on truck chassis;
- the road often traveled in the creek bed because it was solid rock.

From this point in time it sure seems like those were the good old days.

Paul Spencer Flynn

Cullewhee, N. C.

Thursday, May 10, 1984

Dr. Paul Flynn, son of Dr. Luther and Ada Flynn, was raised on the campus of Pittman Center. Dr Paul's father was principal of the school. Dr. Paul is a professor at Western North Carolina University.



Pittman Center THEN and NOW

● Doctor Robert F. Thomas, superintendent of Pittman Center, makes a medical call. Dr. Thomas has helped appreciably in raising the health level of the area during his many years of service.

BY ANNE HANDLON

THIS ARTICLE IS REPRINTED FROM "WORLD OUTLOOK" - AND APPEARED IN THAT MAGAZINE IN 1955.

Miss Handlon, a veteran teacher at Pittman Community Center, recalls some of the early days of work in the mountains of Tennessee and shows us what great changes have taken place in mountain life and how Pittman Center has helped in this process.

PITTMAN Community Center was just a dot in the wilderness of the Tennessee Smokies back in the early twenties. Now it is a thriving school community and a fine example of the way our Methodist Church reaches out a helping hand, starts a project, then withdraws gradually as people are able to take over.

Within the last year, the state and county have taken over the running of the school itself. But the work of building up the spiritual resources and health of the people in a twenty-five mile mountain area still goes on under the able direction of Doctor Robert F. Thomas, physician and superintendent of the place.

When I arrived at Pittman Center in 1923 to teach in the first grade, there were just three buildings hugging the side of Webb's Mountain. Now there are fifteen buildings housing several school departments, medical work, crafts, church, store, and post office.

Back in the early days, there was no green campus lawn as there is today at Pittman. We teachers and workers watched our step as we walked among scythe-cut weeds; for copperheads lurked and once in a while a rattler came down off the heights for water in time of drought.

The roads were pretty bad the first year I was at the Center. I remember

riding on the school bus with the pupils to make a home call. The bus was not a real one like today's modern vehicle. It was a Jolt Wagon drawn by mules. One creek crossing seemed rather long as we rode up the Copeland section. I noticed a strange thing. We were fording the creek endwise. No wonder our pupils had difficulty getting to school on rainy days when the creek "riz up."

It took two days for our mail to come from Sevierville twenty miles away. The mailman kept all letters and packages overnight at his home halfway to the school. Next day he put them into saddlebags and brought them on horseback up into the moun-



tains. Sometimes his horse had to swim the fords. And that was too bad for the mail.

As the school grew in size, mail became so heavy, especially at Christmas, that something else had to be done. A gravel road was built, a super-highway compared to the old one of red clay and rock. Mail could then be brought in by car. Now the post office is right at the school center itself.

Riding in to Sevierville over the old road was an adventure for us teachers. We forded the river three times in the Model T car given to the school by a northern philanthropist. It took a man to drive. If we stalled in Laurel Ford, the deepest crossing, our driver would attempt to crank the car. While all passengers raised ankles above the swirling waters rushing into the car, the driver draped himself over the hood and cranked. If he was not suc-

cessful in starting the engine, we "hollered" for mules. The man who lived near the ford then brought his trusty animals, rode one out to the car and hitched on. After a few experiences like this, we got wise. One teacher would cross on the dizzy swinging bridge, then run for the mules if the car did not get across. Surely the old road was a far call from the modern highways not far from the school bringing tourists into the national park.

One of our Pittman pupils, whose father was a so-called "moonshiner," got into a peck of trouble one day. The sheriff had a warrant out for his arrest and followed him to the door of the schoolhouse. The boy ducked and splashed through Webb's Creek and up the steep side of the ridge. The whole school watched, breathless, delighted at the drama.

The school boy was more nimble than the sheriff. So he got away. Later this pupil accepted Christ, graduated from high school and trained for the ministry. He married one of the Pittman teachers.

The first year I was at Pittman Center, two epidemics broke out in the mountains: smallpox and typhoid. We had a nurse who had just arrived. She rode horseback sometimes through flooded creek crossings or up amazingly steep mountain ridges on errands of mercy. Besides the epidemic diseases, she had to contend with other maladies rare except to the Appalachian Mountains. There was pellagra, a nutrition disease. There was trachoma, an eye condition resulting in blindness. Also there was the dreaded hookworm which worked its way through the soles of our barefoot pupils' feet and, after



● *Another sign of the progress taking place in the Southern mountains are these children riding in the Pittman Center school bus. These children formerly would have had to walk many miles to attend school.*

getting into the bloodstream, caused dull-eyed listlessness among the children.

Because of these health problems, we were glad to welcome Doctor Robert Thomas, who came to the Center in the middle twenties and has stayed on to the present day. Through his work in educating, inoculating and vaccinating the people, the doctor has wiped out these strange and dread diseases.

Back in 1923 people were still sending barrels of clothing to missionaries. I remember one barrel, which furnished us with a top silk hat, black with a spring in it. What fun we had trying it on. It ended, of course, in a costume box. Then came the clothing boxes sent by the churches. Out of these came shoes for the children. Now that the boys and girls were properly shod, the doctor was helped in his early fight against hookworm. Few people sending those boxes guessed how much they really helped.

During my first year at Pittman there were two things that marred the joy of teaching. One was the sawmill, screeching outside the schoolhouse. The other was my difficulty in understanding the Elizabethan and Chaucerian expressions of the children. Words like *furnent*, *scrouge*, and *feisty* were baffling to me. And neither did my pupils understand my Yankee vernacular. However, we were both patient with each other and I learned the value of simple, direct talk.

One thing haunted me. I regretted the trend of progress that would change the purest English in the world into plain, American book talk. For that is what happened as I taught reading. I have always felt that mountain talk expresses things with a sparse clarity and picturesqueness that is found nowhere else in the country.

With the coming of the tourist after the national park was established in the Smokies, the work of Pittman

School was justified. The world outside simply rushed into a treasured mountain fastness, isolated so many years by poor roads. Pittman helped bridge the gap between the past and the present.

The Pittman Center farm started with chicken raising. A better breed of hens was introduced among the mountain farmers because so many chickens were scrawny and small and ran wild in the woods. Because eggs were an important commodity of barter at the local store, it seemed wise to help people raise better eggs that would bring food values. The next project was vegetable gardens. People had pellagra partly because they had no fruits or vegetables in their diet. Then the Pittman apple orchards were started, also a small cannery for canning them. Now the school farm has truck gardens, good milk cows, and a model reforestation project. All these things have helped bring in more money, thus raising the economic situ-

ation in that area.

The first hand weaving that was done at the school was carried on by Mrs. Halson, an eighty-year-old woman of that section, who wove coverlets, using nut and bark dyes to color the wool. Later, rugs were woven on the big looms in the weaving department. Mrs. Robert Thomas established the present cooperative organization, which really brings in extra cash to the weavers in the homes.

Pittman workers have, down through the years, helped in the little chapels of the mountains. At first it was not easy and there were problems. The John Ringen Memorial Chapel at Black Gum Gap was started in an unused log cabin. Near the close of the first service, a commotion was heard outside. An old lady was chasing her runaway cow. Half the congregation slipped out to help round up the animal. The next Sunday, so large a crowd had gathered that services had to be held out under the sky. There in the Gap we looked off at one of the most scenic views in the Smokies, while the sermon was being preached.

At Webb's Creek, during a young people's meeting a boy with a bottle on his hip stepped in and sat down on a back seat. During the singing, he quietly came down near the front. At the close of the service he stepped out the nearest window and ran, while the sheriff waited patiently near the door for him to come out.

Some Methodist workers were holding a service in the Cosby Chapel, back in Prohibition days. The congregation was startled by gunfire outside. A Federal officer and a moonshiner were having a pitched battle, the outcome of a still raid. When the smoke cleared, both men lay stretched out dead in the churchyard.

This sort of thing is past history. Local people are taking over more and more of the financial and leadership responsibility of the mountain churches. Young people, trained at Pittman, are taking their places in the advance of a living religion.



● So-called progress is not all gain. These mountain people preserved customs forgotten elsewhere; spoke almost pure Elizabethan English. Modern communications and transportation are breaking down this cultural heritage.

I have always been glad that Evan's Chapel was my first Sunday school charge while I was at Pittman Center. Another teacher and I walked up past Luther Wright's mill wheel in the midst of beautiful rural mountain scenery. We helped Steve McCarter, the superintendent, with Sunday school. Now the chapel is inside the national park boundary, but it has been preserved by the government as a meeting place. Every Memorial Day people who used to live on park land come back for an all day sing. Some bring the Old Harp Hymn Book, which originally came from England. Singing from these books helps preserve the old hymns of our Protestant denominations in this country.

The earliest religious services at Pittman were held in the school gym. Folding chairs were set up for the Sunday congregation. The morning sun slanted in through the plain glass windows, lighting up the blue, painted walls. It also lit up the red, wooden

pulpit which had been presented to the Center by Uncle Noah, the local carpenter from up the river. When a separate building was erected for the gymnasium, the school auditorium, no longer a gym, became a little more churchlike. Now the Burnett Memorial Chapel nestles against the hill across Webb's Creek, a fitting monument to the man who dreamed and brought into reality Pittman Community Center.

The work will go on. Secular education will be carried on by the state. But Methodist missions will continue with the task of helping people to help themselves to better health, wealth and spiritual living in the mountains.

This article is reprinted from the magazine "World Outlook" as originally printed in 1955. We can identify some of the boys on the bus: The boy in overalls is Ronnie Whaley the son of Roy and Zelma Huskey Whaley. The boy just in front of him is Tommy McMahan, son of Fred and Archie Ray McMahan. In back on right is Wayne Spence, on left ? Seagle.

Bringing The Outside World To The Smokies

By ELLEN AKERS,
ENTERPRISE Reporter

It was an era when many of America's young girls were becoming "thoroughly modern," enduring permanent waves under octopus-like contraptions, and learning to "flap."

It was the experiences of friends like Ruth and Lillian, however, which more than captured the attention of Rural Retreat's Jessie Mechem Ledford.

She'd listen as her friends would tell of teaching Bible school in the Cumberland Mountains, visualizing herself in a similar setting.

"Their description of the eagerness of the children in this remote region inspired me," Jessie recalls. "I learned more about it and found I could go to such a place and teach the very next summer."

That first experience took a day and a half to reach by horseback, and contact with the outside world was practically non-existent.

Later, around 1922, she went to work at the Pittman Center, which had been established in the heart of the great Smoky Mountains. The Center was only a year and a half old when she arrived. Before it there were no educational facilities at the mouth of Webb's Creek or in the surrounding area. When school wagons (not buses) became available, relates Jessie, hundreds of children began to pour out of the valleys and coves to attend school. "They wanted to learn!"

Many had to endure walking long distances just to get to a wagon, she adds. "When they arrived, especially the older ones



JESSIE TODAY at her Rural Retreat home.

(some up in their 30's who had been deprived of an education and had to travel from lumber camps to get to school); they made up for lost opportunities." She observes, it's a kind of dedication hard to find among the nation's students today.

She recalls it was the older students who whole-heartedly poured themselves into education, participating in spelling bees, debates, oratorical contests, play productions, discussions and more.

"We did not try to eliminate the old English or traditional customs which had been conserved in this enclave and which had been lost in the rest of the country. Believe it or not, most of the citizens had high standards. We even started and maintained a Sunday School and later a church on the creek which had become famous for plenty of moonshine stills."

She left Pittman to teach at

Berea College. It was then that she met and later married the late Allen Ledford, a young Methodist minister. His desire was to establish a school and center much like Pittman had been in its earlier days before it became a large institution.

The Ledfords worked at the Clinch Valley school in Tennessee for 22 years in all. She taught for a couple of years to help the school get started with no compensation. It eventually became an accredited high school, and her husband served as its principal for 13 years. They raised one daughter who adopted her parents' educational values and is now editor of the *Congressional Quarterly* in Washington, D.C.

"The two mountain communities were as different in personality as the mountains around them, but both were in need. Whatever advantages were being offered in the outside world were unavailable to them."

Fortunately, good roads and bridges have since removed the isolation of those communities.

Her fondness for the mountains and for rural life didn't end with leaving the Clinch and Copper Mountain region. When her husband decided to retire in the 1960's, the couple already knew it would be in Southwest Virginia. They purchased and lived at the Laurel Glen Farm, and later sold it for another farm Jessie calls "Mountain Home."

"I have really enjoyed the beautiful countryside here and the congenial people," says Jessie, who holds a master's degree in education. She had the opportunity to meet many area residents when she taught briefly at Wytheville Community College.

Retired, Jessie spends her days now running up the mileage on her Chevy Citation and keeping track of the educational and special interest pursuits of five grandchildren.

LIFE GOES ON

Continuity And Change

BRIEF HISTORY OF PITTMAN CENTER ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

After many years of dormancy, the Pittman Center Alumni Association was reorganized, or rejuvenated in 1973 through the efforts of Mr. Eugene Huskey while principal at Pittman Center Elementary School. He and his staff enlisted support to host the 1973 Alumni meeting. It was with such success that the vote was unanimous to have an annual alumni meeting on the first Saturday in May each year at the Pittman Center Elementary School. During the 13 years (1973 - 1985) the older students and faculty members have become fewer. In May 1985, only Mr. Wilford Morris was present to represent the first graduating class of 1928. Average attendance has been around 250.

Officers of the Pittman Center Alumni Association since 1974 are as follows:

1974

Mrs. Archie Ray McMahan, President
Mrs. Lola Moon, Sec.

1975

Mr. Eugene Huskey, President
Mr. Glenn Cardwell, V.P.
Mrs. Lola Moon, Sec.
Mrs. Dorothy Faye Bright, Treas.

1976

Same officers as previous year

1977

Mr. Eugene Huskey, President
Mrs. Ethel Shultz, V.P.
Mrs. Lola Moon, Sec.
Mrs. Dorothy Faye Bright, Treas.

1978

Mr. Billy Proffitt, President
Mr. Donald Shultz, V.P. President
Mrs. Dorothy Faye, Sec. & Treas.

1979

Mr. Billy Proffitt, President
Mr. Donald Shultz, V.P.
Mrs. Peggy McCarter, Sec. & Treas.

1980

Mrs. Nina Noland Manning, President
Mrs. Carl Shultz, V.P.
Mrs. Hazel Cantrell
Sec. & Treas.

1981

Mr. Carl Shultz, President
Mr. Rex Howard, V.P.
Mrs. Joyce Green, Sec. & Treas.

1982

Mr. Rex Howard, President
Mr. Marion King, V.P.
Mrs. Archie Ray McMahan, Sec. & Treas.

1983

Mr. Marion King, President
Mr. Rex Howard, V.P.
Mrs. Archie Ray McMahan, Sec. & Treas.

1984

Mr. Murrell King, President
Mr. Benny King, V.P.
Mrs. Ruby Noland Howard, Sec. & Treas.

1985

Mr. Sam Manning, President
Mr. Donald Shultz, V. P.
Mrs. Ruby Noland Howard, Sec. & Treas.

1986

Mr. Sam Manning, President
Mrs. Nina Noland Manning, V.P.
Mrs. Aileen Maples Ogle, Sec. & Treas.



Pittman Center Alumni Reunion - 1970's.
Speakers Table: Eugene Huskey, Janet Huskey, Dr. Robert Thomas, Marian Cline, Rev. Ralph Cline.

Left to Right: Ora Shultz (daughter of Silas Shultz and a graduate of Pittman Center), Pauline Hoffman Ingle (daughter of Dr. Charles and Ann Hoffman, a graduate of Pittman Center School and a registered nurse), Grace McMahan Bogart (daughter of Roy McMahan, wife of Hal Bogart, and a graduate of Pittman Center School).



Beulah Branam Ellis, wife of deceased Chester Ellis and daughter of Lillie and Edward Branam. Beulah is a graduate of Pittman Center High School. A beautiful person.

Lucile Stamey Brown, wife of Buford Brown, daughter of Lillie Bradshaw and Robert Stamey. Lucile is a graduate of Pittman Center School and is a retired school teacher of Sevier County.





Left to Right: Archie Ray Dennis McMahan (wife of Fred McMahan), sister of Dr. Luther Flynn, Anna Mae O. Ellis (former teacher at Pittman center and at that time wife of H.T. Ogle).

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Shults. Kenneth is a graduate of Pittman Center High School.



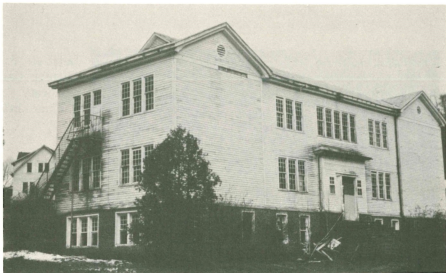
Left to Right: Eddie Reece (graduate of Pittman Center) and Austin Green (owner of a grocery store and at present County Commissioner - married to Shearlene Dixon).

Perry Joe Scudder with family; wife Mary Steele and daughters April and Brandy. Joe is a graduate of Pittman Center School and is an engineer with the Palmolive Company of North Carolina.



Two graduates of Pittman Center talking things over. Left to Right: Doyle Williams, an employee at Oak Ridge and Wallace (Buck) Stamey. Wallace has worked in Washington, D. C., since he entered the employment field.

This picture shows the demolition of the Pittman Center High School Building. A very sad occasion; to see it come down. It had served its purpose. Lots of students had passed through with 520 graduating.



Kate Price Reed with back to camera talking to Jessie Mechem Ledford. Mrs. Ledford was among the first teachers at the Pittman Center School. Jennie Ledford can be seen in the background. Jennie is the wife of Glen Ledford and a sister-in-law of Mrs. Jessie Ledford.



Left to Right: Doyle Williams (partially blocked), Dr. Robert F. Thomas, (Pittman's first and only doctor), Mrs. Zelma Lange Hixon. Mrs. Hixon was one of the earlier teachers at Pittman Center School.

Claude Ogle, (son of Newt and Minnie Bradshaw Ogle), unidentified, Mrs. Claude Ogle, Evelyn Branam Hendricks. This picture was made at one of the Pittman Center Alumni meetings.



Left to Right: Zenith Whaley (back to camera), Lora Huskey (back to camera), Raymond Huskey (son of Leonard and Lora Wright Huskey and retired employee of Aluminum Company of America - a graduate of Pittman Center School).



Left to Right: Blanche Watson Blalock, Kate Price Reed. Attending an Alumni meeting at Pittman Center. Blanche and Kate were graduates of the 1933 class.



Left to Right: Lucille McCarter Smith, Anna Mae O. Ellis, Pauline Hoffman Ingle, Mrs. Kenneth McMahan. This picture was made at the home of Anna Mae Ellis at reception for Dr. Luther Flynn, former principal of Pittman Center.

Left to Right: Evelyn Branam Hendricks, Patty (daughter of Gordon and Sallie Huskey), Sallie Shomo Huskey (former student and later a teacher at Pittman Center School). Pictured at a reception for Dr. Luther Flynn.



Left to Right: Mr. and Mrs. Clyde McMahan. Clyde a graduate of Pittman Center was a teacher in the Blount County School System for years, and later a County Judge. This picture was made at one of the Alumni meetings.

Ortense Wilson and husband attending an Alumni Meeting at Pittman Center. Ortense is a graduate of Pittman Center High School.



THE FINALE OF THE PITTMAN COMMUNITY CENTER

The board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a Corporation of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, had been in contact with the Sevier County Board of Education, pertaining to the purchase and taking over Pittman Center School. The board at this time consisted of Rube Hatcher - Chairman, Bill Cox, Sidney Gilreath, Walter King, Estel Ownby, J. B. Rolen, Tom Sharp. After much correspondence and discussion a decision was reached. The Board of Home Missions would sell seven and six tenths acres (7.6), this sale would include the High School and Elementary School buildings the Dormitory, and the old Home Economics building, at a price of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000.00).

For the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), the Home Mission Board granted, bargained, sold and delivered to the Sevier County Board of Education all of the singular and personal property listed in a prepared schedule consisting of thirteen (13) pages. This document was signed the 21st day of June 1955 by G. Stanly Lynch, President; thus ending the involvement of the Board of Home Missions of the Methodist Church in the Pittman Center School.

It was a sad, also a happy time, when we, the citizens of Pittman Center Community could say to the Home Mission Board of the Methodist Church, "We can now support and educate our children." They had helped us to do that for thirty five years or more. It was about time for us to come forward and say thank you for what you did , this expression is inadequate we know. Part of this time was during the depression years - a hard time for everyone, not just the people of Pittman Community Center.

At the time of the takeover by the Sevier County Board of Education of Pittman Center School, Dr. Robert Thomas was superintendent of the work of the Home Mission Board in the Pittman Center area. The Mission Board furnished a music teacher, school nurse, and helped in any other capacity they could. Dr. Thomas remained in a supervisory capacity while continuing his work at the Baldwin Clinic until the year 1964. Dr. Thomas had been the Missions only doctor and, after 38 years of continuous service, he retired. The Baldwin Clinic was phased out and later a parsonage was built on the hill where the Clinic had been located.

You may ask what has happened to the property left after the Sevier County Board of Education took over the school. As you may recall, the Pittman Center Community consisted of about fifteen hundred acres (1500). The Foothills Parkway took about five hundred acres (500) for the right-of-way, seven and six tenths acres (7.6) was sold for the school and the Home Mission Board still holds around nine hundred (900) acres.

The supervision of the holdings of the home Mission board is taken care of by the Rev. Ralph Cline who has been Pastor of the four Methodist Churches in charge; namely Shultz Grove, Burnett Memorial, Webbs Creek and Shields Mountain. This year completes his twenty second year as Pastor of the Pittman area Methodist Churches.

In the year of 1963 the Pittman Center High School was consolidated with Pi Beta Phi High School of Gatlinburg to become Gatlinburg - Pittman High School. The two High Schools, being small in enrollment, were unable to compete in some sports. The Sevier County Board of Education decided it would be feasible to combine the two schools. They built new buildings incorporating modern facilities. This they did by purchasing property from the George Proffitt family on Hickam Hill, about equal distance from each town. Sometime later Gatlinburg annexed the area where the school was located. The School Board moved Eugene Huskey to be the Principal of the new endeavor. Eugene, a graduate of the Pittman Center High School, was principal of the Pitttag Center High School when it was consolidated with Pi Beta Phi High School of Gatlinburg.

The two Elementary Schools left, one in each town, were updated with some new buildings, new equipment, and are now among the leading Elementary Schools in Sevier County.

In 1974 the area in and around Pittman Community was incorporated and encompassed about 5 (5) square miles. The reason for incorporation was to protect the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River from those who might choose to pollute or use it for commercial purposes. The City was chartered as a Mayor - Aldermatic Government. The mayor and most all of the Alderman elected have been former Pittman Center Students. Since the city had no place to hold their commission meetings and having to meet in one of Elementary School rooms, they petitioned the Methodist Mission Board for the purchase of the old Home Economics Building.

The Mission Board responded with a deed for one and one half acres (1.50) of property on which the Home Economics Building was located. They stated that this property was to be used for community services. A Federal Grant was received and two floors of the old building were renovated at a cost of about \$40,000.00. The first floor (the former lunch-room) was modernized and is used by the Cherokee-Douglas Authority in its Nutritional Program for the Senior Citizens in the Community. It is also the meeting place for the Ruritan Club and the Pittman Community Volunteer Fire Department. The second floor is used as a Council Room, the Mayors office, Police Department, and as a meeting place for the 4-H Club of the Pittman Center Elementary School.

The area incorporated is part of Webbs Creek, including Cobbly Nob Golf Course, Emerts Cove, part of Buckhorn, and down the river to Laurel Branch. A policeman, with the aid of the Sevier County Sheriffs Patrol, keeps law and order. Life in the communities is much the same as before incorporation. Many road improvements have been made. There are about one hundred fifty five (155) permanent households and about fifty seasonal (50) households within the township of Pittman Center. The population is now listed as being 528.

We must give credit where credit is due. We are helped by Gatlinburg, our neighbor, being a resort town furnishes employment for many of our residents who want to work. Being bounded one side by the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is an asset.

Our town, as most, is supported by revenue from sales tax, land tax, gas tax, advalorem tax, and revenue sharing. The Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River which flows through Pittman Center is one of the cleanest rivers in Tennessee. We have Cobbly Nob Golf Course which is privately owned; these are two things to offer tourist that visit our area.

The river is used as it has always been for generations for swimming, fishing, rafting, canoeing, and as a place to just relax.

Pittman Center has two churches: Hills Creek Baptist located on Emerts Cove Road, and Burnett Memorial Methodist, located at the mouth of Tunis Branch.

Business operations in Pittman Center include: three (3) grocery stores, one (1) seasonal campground, two (2) condominiums, two (2) real estate offices, about twelve (12) tourist cabins, one (1) apartment building, one (1) tourist inn, one (1) upholstery shop, (1) restaurant.

Again may we, the members of the Pittman Center Historical committee and representatives of the Pittman Center Alumni Association, say we are grateful for the training and education that we received as a result of everyone's endeavors in Mission work in the Pittman Center area.

Kate P. Reed
Vida Reagan
Arnold Morris
Ethel E. Shultz
Glenn Cardwell
Mary M. Eakin



Old Pittman Center Home Economics Building - Now Pittman Center City Hall

PITTMAN CENTER CITY HALL
(formerly the Home Economics Building)

The building which houses the City Hall facilities of Pittman Center was started in the fall of 1937. One day in 1937, Dr. J. S. Burnett, director of the Pittman Community Center, informed Miss Cora Deats, a teacher at the school, that he had contacted the Methodist Board of Home Missions to send an architect to start building a new home economics building. Dr. Edmund Hammond was sent by the Board and plans were started. Dr. Burnett and Miss Deats made several trips to visit other home economics departments in the various schools in the Knoxville area in the company of Dr. Hammond.

A decision was made to construct a building that would also house the school lunchroom and the teachers who lived on the Pittman Center Campus. Work progressed under the supervision of Mr. Joe Townsend and Mr. Carl McCarter, with other carpenters (Lystra Shultz, Wayne McCarter, and others) helping. Cora Deats, who later married Conley Huskey, remembers the stone foundation, or the basement level being finished the night of the big flood in August 1938. Dr. Hammond, still working as an architect under the direction of the Board, had many other projects to attend. In his travels, he would come and see about the building for perhaps a couple of weeks and then would move on to other assigned projects.

Dr. Burnett was anxious for the home economics department to be modern, but only so far that the girls who took home economics would have the equipment in their homes. The living room floor was to be "pegged" as a carry over from the pioneer homes of the mountain community. Although the teachers' rooms were not completely finished, the building was occupied as a teaching facility on January 7, 1939. Shortly thereafter, Carl McCarter and his crew finished the ceiling on the top floor for the teacher's dormitory rooms. Teachers occupying the rooms that first year included Cora Deats, Mary Elder, Maysie Pierce, and Ora Shultz. Along with the four bedrooms for the teachers' use, the upstairs unit also had a kitchen, living room, bathroom and a dining room.

The building was used without alterations until the Pittman Center High School merged with the Gatlinburg Pi Beta Phi High School in the fall of 1963. The building remained vacant and unused from June 1963 until 1976, when it was renovated by funds from the government. Money for renovation was from federal grants, and approved projects by the County Court Officials. Bids were let out and Blalock Construction Company received the low bid. Cost of the renovation of the old lunchroom (bottom level) and the middle floor amounted to around \$40,000.00. Various members of the Blalock family had gone to Pittman Center School and they were anxious to have the building restored as were other former students, particularly since it was to be used as City Hall for the newly created city of Pittman Center. This building along with the Pinnacle Handicraft building were all that was left of the Pittman Center Community.

The Board of Home Missions gave the building to the city of Pittman Center to be used as city property. The land which came as a gift from the Board included the area from the road up to and including the girls dormitory site.

The above was given to me by Cora Huskey and Carl McCarter, March, 1981.

Glenn Cardwell