



—Bert Winford Photo

All nine pupils at one-room De Luz school join their teacher, Mrs. Marion Strittmatter, in song. Clockwise from front center are Pamala Brain, 6; Vickie

K. Berger, 9; Ricky Brain, 7; Albert Poston, 9; Bobby Harris, 9; Wanda Chestmowicz, 12; Jimmy Harris, 11; Fred Morse, 13; and Jeanette Brain, 12.

**CLASS OF 9 NOT QUITE READY**

**Graduation Is Omitted  
 At One-Room De Luz School**

By **BILL PARRY**

**DE LUZ** — The one-room elementary school that serves this community will not conduct graduation exercises this year. The semester ends June 21.

The annual commencement exercise was canceled because none of the school's nine pupils was ready to graduate.

"Two students graduated last year and two more are scheduled to leave next year, but I felt that none of the children was ready to go on to high school this year," said Mrs. Marion Strittmatter, the school's only teacher.

De Luz Elementary School, located near the Riverside County line in the Santa Margarita Mountains, is one of a half dozen one-room, one-teacher schools still operating in San Diego County. It was established in 1887.

De Luz school and its methods of operation present a contrast to the modern educational plants maintained by metropolitan school districts.

**INSTRUCTION INFORMAL**

No bus service is provided. Children get to class the best way they can — on bicycles, in the family car or by horse. Classroom instruction is more informal and the district has three instead of the usual five school trustees.

The community, 11 miles northwest of Fallbrook, contains an estimated 50 population. The district's assessed

value totals \$240,000. A 79 cent tax rate obtains funds to operate the school.

De Luz has no business district, no water company, no telephone service. It is served by a winding, two-lane road that fords the Santa Margarita River before starting up the mountain. Some housewives keep in touch by using Army surplus field telephones strung along the valley.

**BUILT IN 1925**

The present school building was built in 1925. It is of adobe construction. Ivy covers the exterior walls. Inside, an electric furnace heats the single-high-ceiling classroom. The comparatively low district tax rate, however, provides most modern teaching aids among which are science kits, sound movie equipment, encyclopedias and a radio-phonograph combination.

Mrs. Strittmatter, who

lives in Fallbrook, teaches all eight grades. Her teaching method is a modification of big district techniques.

"I run the school more like a home than a formal schoolroom," said Mrs. Strittmatter. "Students learn by example rather than by hard rules and regulations. They are taught in groups according to their skill. Generally speaking, each progresses according to his ability.

"If we have a project — like nature study — it is geared to the whole group. For example, in writing, I give the lesson to everybody at once. Naturally, I don't expect as much from the younger children. It keeps me busy, but it works out pretty well.

"I stress the U. S. Constitution and respect for the flag," Mrs. Strittmatter added. "It is no problem with these children. They have a great natural devotion."



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